



Engaging Volunteers through ISOTURES: Training Volunteers for Success in 4-H¹

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University Regulation 6C1-3.0031 4(a)

Upon selection, the department/ operational unit shall design each volunteer specific tasks or duties and provide appropriate training. The services expected of each volunteer(s) should be provided to him or her in writing.

Overview

Training is a mixture of leading and directing the growth of people by teaching so that volunteers can be more effective and proficient. Teaching adults and youth volunteers to teach others is the subject matter expertise of the 4-H Agent. As experts, with a 4-H volunteer focus, a 4-H Agent is expected to improve a volunteer's performance in their current role and future role in the county 4-H program. Vineyard (1995) relates volunteer training to a 'cycle':

1. People want to do a good job and be successful
2. Training equips them for success and satisfaction

3. When people are successful, the organization or effort is successful
4. This aids in volunteer retention...
5. ...And attracts new people and supporters who want to do a good job and be successful

Training must focus on doing the job better, differently and in new ways. Naylor (1967) identified several layers of learning and although his concept is nearly 50 years old, it is relevant today:

- Unawareness – the volunteer could care less
- Awareness – the volunteer notices, but wonders if it's true
- Interest – the volunteer thinks it might be important
- Acceptance – the volunteer tests against experiences, the idea seems to be true
- Conviction – important to the volunteer and others

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- Commitment – the idea has overriding importance to the volunteer and determines how the volunteer feels and acts

The goal as a volunteer trainer should be to get volunteers to at least the conviction stage, if not to commitment. With respect to the Volunteer Life Cycle, volunteers that are committed to 4-H and are less likely to exit the program.

Not only is training an important part of a success volunteer program, in 4-H it is UF/IFAS policy.

In this section the following questions will be addressed:

- What *competencies* does a volunteer need to be successful?
- What *skills* does a volunteer need to be successful?
- What are the *stages* of volunteer involvement?
- What *methods* can be used to increase volunteer knowledge?
- What *methods* can be used to improve volunteer skills?
- What *methods* can be used to modify volunteer attitudes?
- What is a *volunteer training plan*?
- What are some examples of *subject area teaching* that occurs within a volunteer program?
- How does teaching in the subject area relate to *ISOTURES*?

Competencies

The Volunteer Research Knowledge and Competency Taxonomy Model (VRKC) is based on a study that identified the competencies that volunteers will need in order to effectively deliver 4-H Youth Development programs and activities in the next decade. This taxonomy provides 4-H professionals with a national focus and direction related to the levels of competency and the perceived needs of 4-H

volunteers. It provides insights into priorities for volunteer development (Culp et al., 2005). This model emphasizes the importance of six primary competencies:

1. **Communications** – volunteers demonstrate the ability to create, deliver, and interpret information effectively through nonformal means.
2. **Organization** – volunteer demonstrate the ability to engage others in planning, providing and delivering positive youth development programming in a community.
3. **4-H Program Management** – volunteers must understand and follow appropriate policies, procedures and safety guidelines, when acting on behalf of UF/IFAS.
4. **Educational Design and Delivery** – volunteers demonstrate the ability to plan, implement and evaluate research-based learning opportunities that effectively promote positive youth development.
5. **Positive Youth Development** – volunteers demonstrate the ability to intentionally and appropriately apply the principles and best practices that result in the positive development of youth.
6. **Interpersonal Characteristics** – volunteers demonstrate the ability to develop effective relationships, work competently with individuals and groups and express empathy and understanding for others.

Skills

The competencies and descriptions listed above in the VRKC model outline the desired outcome for volunteers that receive training in county 4-H programs. Each of the six competencies has skills that provide focus to the competency. These skills represent the objectives of training that should be incorporated into training opportunities for volunteers. These skills are provided by competency below:

Communications

- i. Ability to speak clearly
- ii. Listening skills
- iii. Writing skills
- iv. Non-verbal skills
- v. Use of technology
- vi. Information dissemination & delivery
- vii. Marketing & public relations

Organization

- i. Planning and organizaing
- ii. Time management
- iii. Volunteer recruitment and involvement
- iv. Delegating and empowerment
- v. Service to community

4-H Program Management

- i. Organization & structure of Extension
- ii. Upholding the 4-H mission
- iii. Risk management & youth protection
- iv. Liability awareness and reduction
- v. Club management
- vi. Behavior management
- vii. Record keeping
- viii. Financial management
- ix. Computer skills

Educational Design and Delivery

- i. Use of age-appropriate activities
- ii. Using multiple teaching strategies
- iii. Understanding differences in learning styles
- iv. Knowledge of subject matter
- v. Team building
- vi. Application of experiential learning
- vii. Program evaluation

Positive Youth Development

- i. Developing life skills
- ii. Leadership skills
- iii. Ages & stages of youth development
- iv. Empowerment of others
- v. Practicing youth-adult partnerships
- vi. Appreciating diversity

Stages of Volunteer Involvement

When a volunteer enters the Florida 4-H program, they go through various stages as they become familiar with the Extension system and 4-H.

Hopefully, they gradually take on more and more responsibility. The stages of volunteer involvement are described below as per Smith et al., (1993):

1. In Stage 1, the volunteer becomes familiar with 4-H and its expectations. Background information, specific tasks and ongoing communication provide direction and support to volunteers in exploring, committing and trying their new roles and responsibilities.
2. In Stage 2, the volunteer is ready for analyzing, improving and rapid growth. Coaching helps a person do an even better job as they test new ideas and approaches. Opportunities to interact with key leaders and other staff, charting needs and refining goals establishes direction.
3. In Stage 3, the volunteer becomes comfortable in carrying out responsibilities, knowing what to do and how to do it. Affirmation of the volunteer's value to the organization, opportunities for advancement, new challenges and recognition lead to increased sharing and potential leadership roles.

A typical new volunteer starts with a role of least responsibility and as they develop, increasingly take on more responsibility (McKee & McKee, 2008). New 4-H volunteers need to help through these stages since there is no formal system currently to make this happen.

Methods**Increasing Volunteer Knowledge**

There are a number of training methods available to increase volunteer knowledge.

Lecture

Lecture is a traditional means of transferring information from one person to another. People with no training in educational methods frequently rely solely on this method, regardless of the educational objectives. Novice teachers attempt to teach every subject using this method.

Lecture is designed to transfer knowledge that is not easily obtained in any other manner. The boredom

which learners experience leads many to say lectures are a bad method.

However, lectures are no worse than any other technique. They can be inappropriate or boring, but they can be exciting and informative. Lecture is an efficient method to transmit a great deal of knowledge in a short time.

Reading

Where the material is long and complex, such as a case study, readings should be considered. The chief disadvantage is that people retain the least amount of information from this method. On average, volunteers will retain 20% from a lecture compared to 10% from reading. For this reason, it is best to supplement reading with other methods.

Discussion

Discussion is a much slower means of learning, but it offers the advantage of greater long-term retention of knowledge. Where people remember 20% of what they hear, they retain 70% of what they say.

Field Trips

If the information to impart is how people do things, a good approach is to have them go somewhere to watch others. It can be logistically difficult, but they retain more of what they see compared to what they hear or read.

Visual Media

Narrated digital slide presentations, webinars, or similar media offer the same advantages of the previous techniques with fewer logistical issues.

Panel Discussion

Similar to the discussion technique, a panel discussion is often more structured and provides the ability to provide alternative opinions and varying speakers.

Quizzes

This is an often overlooked method, but one of value. Knowledge retention can be improved to 70%

by having training participants answer questions on a topic presented. This is an excellent strategy when combined with a discussion afterwards.

Improving Volunteer Skills

Skill training normally will be preceded by some explanation of what the volunteer is to do and why. Once a volunteer has acquired knowledge, they must then be able to transfer this knowledge into practice or demonstrate a skill. While many methods can be used to impart knowledge, there are few that are successful in skill development.

Demonstration

The first step in the training process is to demonstrate the skill so the volunteers know the correct methods and what is expected. This can be done by workshop or video.

Role Playing

After a volunteer has seen and heard what is expected, the next step is to have them try it in a situation where it is safe to make mistakes and where they can learn from their errors. An example might involve a volunteer playing the role of a troubled 4-H'er while another plays a club leader who attempts to help the member. This would help teach the skill of listening.

Role playing is done best with someone observing the interactions. Trainees can get comments on their ability to carry out the task. The main disadvantage to role playing is that some people are self-conscious and/or may feel threatened by playing another role. It does, however, provide the closest real situation without performing the task in an actual situation.

Role Shadowing

After participants and trainers become comfortable with the volunteer's ability to employ the skill effectively, trainees can continue to practice in the real situation. This is not merely turning them loose on clients; experience is observed and trainees receive a response on the strengths and weaknesses of their performance. Role shadowing is the last step in skill-training process and should be attempted only

after trainees and trainers are convinced, from practicing in the safe situation, that mistakes are unlikely to be serious enough to harm clientele or facilities.

Modifying Volunteer Attitudes

Attitudinal training is not something that volunteers will want to get involved in often. It is the hardest type of training to do. If a volunteer's attitude is not consistent with a role, it is often easier to provide an alternative role rather than modify an attitude.

On the other hand, attitudinal training is sense of consciousness-raising may be useful to some types of volunteer training. In any case, the following are some techniques that might be used to affect attitudes.

Role Reversal

Here a volunteer plays the role of the person he or she has problems working or sympathizing with. This helps a volunteer see what it is like to be in someone else's shoes.

Self-Evaluation

To increase a volunteer's awareness of personal values, a self-evaluation may help. Common forms include ranking of values, identification of reactions to a case study or analysis of one's own behavior. This method may uncover conflicting values or provide discussion about a volunteer's attitudes toward the volunteer role, the client, other volunteers, or 4-H staff. To use this method, a high degree of trust between volunteer and trainer must exist.

Mentoring/Counseling

One-to-one counseling and mentoring are often good ways to explore a volunteer's attitude. It is also the best long-term method for affecting attitudinal change.

Developing a Volunteer Training Plan

A personal training plan should be developed for all volunteers. It should be based upon their needs.

Discuss the details of developing a volunteer training plan strategy with the Regional Specialized 4-H Agent in the district or the State 4-H Specialist. As the plan is developed, consider the following:

- The basic skills which the volunteer currently possesses
- Needs as seen by the volunteer
- Needs as seen by paid 4-H staff
- The plan should be based upon need
- Have a timeline
- Availability
- Include goals of the volunteer

Examples of Subject Area Teaching Using ISOTURES

ISOTURES is the volunteer leadership model that 4-H uses to manage all aspects of the volunteer program. At the same time, teaching in the youth development subject area occurs throughout this model. The following list offers examples of teaching that in the subject area that occurs frequently within the volunteer program:

1. Identifying Opportunities for Volunteer

Involvement: when working with their advisory committee to identify and develop roles for volunteer involvement, 4-H agents are teaching. When volunteers work with other volunteers to understand and utilize these concepts, the train-the-trainer principle has occurred, and this represents teaching in the subject area.

2. Selecting and Recruiting Volunteers:

when talking with people collectively or individually about volunteer opportunities in 4-H using effective recruitment principles, 4-H agents are educators by sharing information. When volunteers model this behavior by recruiting other volunteers, the train-the-trainer principle has occurred. Likewise, when explaining the volunteer screening process and why it is important, 4-H agents are educators in their subject area. When volunteers model this behavior by explaining and coordinating the

screening process, the train-the-trainer principle has occurred, and is representative of teaching in the subject area.

3. **Orientation:** when a 4-H Agent provides specific information to build potential volunteers' understanding of volunteer roles and responsibilities and the culture of the 4-H and Extension system, the 4-H agent engages as educator/teacher. When volunteers model this behavior by coordinating and taking responsibility for the orientation process, the train-the-trainer principle has occurred, thus representing teaching in the subject area.
4. **Training:** when a 4-H Agent designs, coordinates and implements multiple trainings for volunteers related to youth development, teaching has occurred. When volunteers begin to provide learning opportunities for youth, the train-the-trainer principle has occurred, which represents teaching in the subject area.
5. **Utilization:** when using a volunteer role description to empower a volunteer to take responsibility for any aspect in the 4-H program, 4-H agents are teaching in the subject area. When volunteers model this concept with other volunteers, the train-the-trainer principle has occurred, again representing teaching in the subject area.
6. **Recognition:** by designing a recognition program and communicating the importance of volunteers with others, 4-H agents are teaching in their subject area. When volunteers model this concept with other volunteers, the train-the-trainer principle has occurred, representing teaching in the subject area.
7. **Evaluation:** via the design of an evaluation strategy coupled with the communication with others of the value of volunteers, 4-H agents are teaching in their subject area. When volunteers model this concept with other volunteers, the train-the-trainer principle has occurred, so, too, representing teaching in the subject area.
8. **Sustain:** when a 4-H agent resolves conflict using conflict resolution techniques, works with others to build financial resources for the

volunteer program, or builds partnerships and collaborations with other organizations to support the volunteer program, the 4-H agent is teaching in the subject area. When volunteers model these concepts with others, the train-the-trainer principle has occurred, representing teaching in the subject area.

Conclusion

Training must focus on doing the job better, differently, and in new ways. In order to extend the Volunteer Life Cycle, volunteers have to do a good job and be successful. Training must equip volunteers for success and satisfaction. A successful volunteer leads to a successful organization or program initiative. This aids in volunteer retention and attracts new volunteers and supporters who want to do a good job and be successful.

The Volunteer Research and Knowledge Competencies outline six outcomes that training should encompass including communication, educational design and delivery, positive youth development, interpersonal characteristics, 4-H program management, and organization. Each of these outcomes contains objectives that training can fulfill.

Every volunteer comes into 4-H at one of three stages. Depending upon the stage of the volunteer, training related to knowledge, skills, and attitudes should be provided. Success of the training will likely be determined by not only the need of the volunteer, but also the method of training chosen. Exemplary 4-H programs develop training plans for each volunteer and provide multiple mixed-method training opportunities. Finally, ISOTURES is more than a volunteer leadership and management model—it is an opportunity to apply subject matter expertise.

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